

## Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /054 W

----- 019630

R 240844Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 833

INFO CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

:AMEMBASSY JAKARTA 4295

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 2344

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SOCI, RP

SUBJECT: NATIONAL REFERENDUM: MANILA ARCHDIOCESE WARNS AGAINST  
USING CHURCHES AS POLITICAL FORUMS

1. PRESS FEBRUARY 24 GAVE FRONTPAGE LEAD HEADLINE TREAT-  
MENT TO MANILA ARCHDIOCESE CIRCULAR URGING FAITHFUL TO  
VOTE ACCORDING TO CONSCIENCE FEB. 27 AND BANNING USE OF  
CHURCHES AS POLITICAL FORUMS. WEEKEND CIRCULAR WAS SIGNED  
BY MSGR. BENJAMIN MARINO IN HIS CAPACITY AS VICAR GENERAL  
OF ARCHDIOCESE.

2. CIRCULAR ASKED ALL PARISHES COUNTERACT ACTIVITIES  
SOME PRIESTS AND NUNS WHO DISTRIBUTING LEAFLETS INCITING  
PEOPLE TO BOYCOTT REFERENDUM. SUCH BOYCOTT ACTION CONTRARY  
TO STATEMENT OF CATHOLIC HIERARCHY, AND PARISHES ASKED TO  
FORBID DISTRIBUTION SUCH LITERATURE IN CHURCHES. REFERRING  
TO PENITENTIAL (READ BOYCOTT) PROCESSION FEB. 21 (MANILA 2294)  
IN PART SPONSORED BY ASSOCIATION MAJOR RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS  
IN PHILIPPINES (AMRSP), STATEMENT NOTED THIS "ACT OF  
DEFIANCE" NOT IN LEAST ENDORSED BY HIERARCHY.

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3. ARCHBISHOP OF MANILA JAIME SIN COMMENTED ON GENERAL MATTER AS FOLLOWS FEB 24 DURING CONVERSATION WITH LABATT. CHURCH SHOULD CONTINUE SPEAK OUT ON MORAL ISSUES AND, IN THIS CONNECTION, HE FULLY APPROVED READING OF SELECTED STATEMENTS SUCH AS CBCP STATEMENT ON REFERENDUM FROM PLU-PITS. HOWEVER, THIS DID NOT MEAN CHURCHES SHOULD BECOME POLITICAL FORUMS. ASKED WHY HE HAD NOT SIGNED CIRCULAR HIMSELF SIN CONTENTED HIMSELF WITH REPLY THAT INASMUCH HE ATTEMPTING BE A UNIFYING FORCE WITHIN CHURCH, HE DIRECTED VICAR GENERAL TO SIGN. OBVIOUSLY, HE ADDED, IT QUITE UNDERSTOOD THAT CIRCULAR CARRIED WEIGHT HIS OFFICE BEHIND IT.

4. SIN TACITLY ADMITTED GOVERNMENT PROBABLY ATTEMPTING PLAY UP CHURCH DIVISIONS OVER REFERENDUM, BUT DOWN-PLAYED SUCH SPLIT, SAYING IT WOULD LARGELY DISAPPEAR AFTER VOTE OCCURRED. HE ALSO DOWN-PLAYED RECENT WARNINGS TO FOREIGN PRIESTS TO STOP MEDDLING IN POLITICAL MATTERSN THOUGH NOTING "SOME FEW" COULD RISK DEPORTATION IF THEY DIDN'T TONE DOWN ACTIVITIES. ANY ATTEMPT DRIVE WEDGE BETWEEN FOREIGN AND FILIPINO PRIESTS WOULD FOUNDER, HE SAID, SUGGESTING MOST DIOCESAN PRIESTS WOULD NOT BUY SUCH TACTIC.

5. COMMENT: IN VIEW STRIDENT VOICES OF CHURCH MINORITY WING ELEMENTSN SIN VERY LIKELY HAS BEEN UNDER STRONG PRES-SURE FROM GOVERNMENT TO SET RECORD STRAIGHT WITH RESPECT CHURCH'S OFFICIAL POSITION ON REFERENDUM. CIRCULAR DID THIS, AND ALTHOUGH EDICT SUPPOSEDLY APPLIES ONLY TO MANILA ARCHDIOCESE, IT CAN BE EXPECTED HAVE NATIONWIDE EFFECT. FACT THAT SIN ESTIMATES SOME 66 OF 72 ACTIVE BISHOPS IN CBCP REJECT CONCEPT REFERENDUM BOYCOTT IN FAVOR PARTICI-PATION (THIS COINCIDES GENERALLY WITH EMBASSY EVALUATION) PROBABLY MADE IT EASIER FOR HIM TO ISSUE CIRCULAR. HIS ACTION MAY BE UNDERSTOOD BY HIS CHURCH AS SPECIFIC EN-JOINDER AGAINST CONTINUATION OF POLITICKING IN THE CHURCH BY ACTIVISTS, AND THEREBY HELP SAVE HIS FACE WITH GOP. HOWEVER, IT PROBABLY WILL NOT TURN OFF ACTIVISTS WHO ALMOST PASSIONATELY CONVINCED OF RIGHTNESS THEIR ACTION.

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6. WHETHER DIVISIONS IN CHURCH PROMPTED BY PRESIDENT WILL DIE AS QUICKLY AS ARCHBISHOP SUGGESTS AFTER REFERENDUM IS DEBATABLE. PRESIDENT HIGHLY IRRITATED AT EMBARRASSING OPPOSITION FROM CHURCH QUARTERS. HE MAY WELL CONTINUE TO CULTIVATE IF NOT SO ACTIVELY A SPLIT IN CHURCH TO GIVE HIM POTENTIAL LEVER OF CONTROL IN FUTURE HOUR OF NEED. SULLIVAN

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 24 FEB 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
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